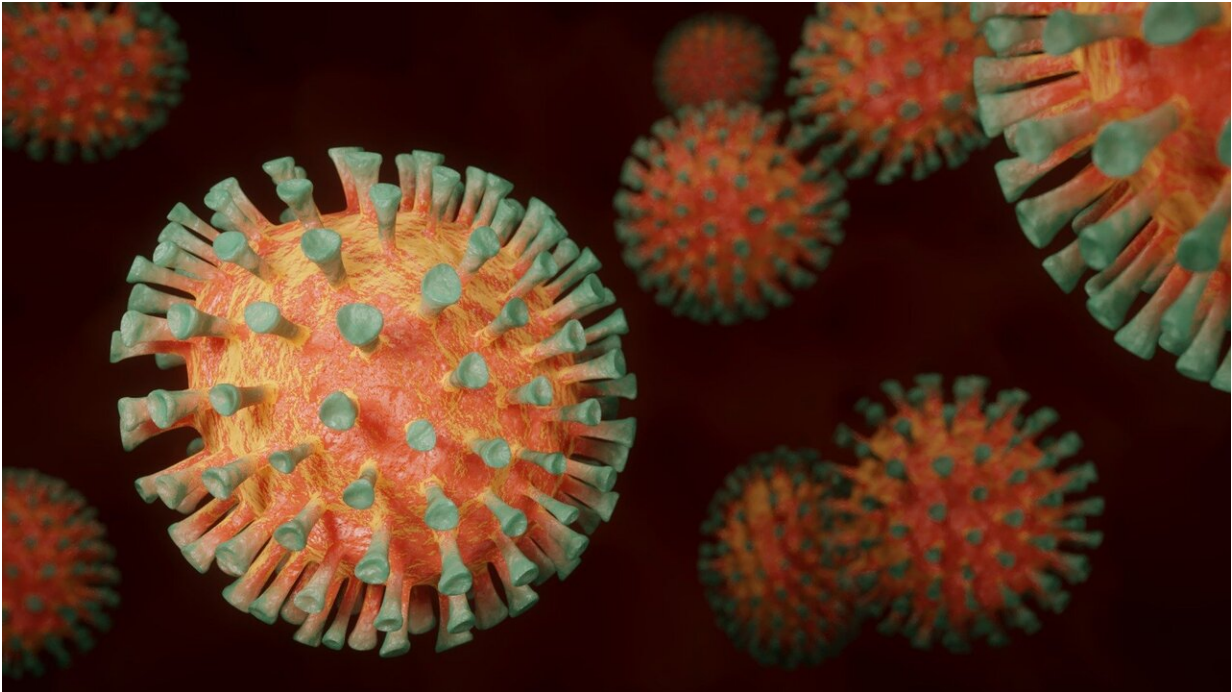


Don't ignore health symptoms amid COVID-19 pandemic

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As the COVID-19 pandemic evolved, fears of contracting the disease and overcrowding in hospitals resulted in many people delaying medical treatment.

With the world welcoming a new year—and hope of an end to the COVID-19 pandemic on the horizon—[health care professionals](#) say it's

important not to ignore symptoms that may require emergency [medical care](#).

"It is incredibly important to keep in mind the types of symptoms, whether you think they are related to COVID-19 or not, that are severe enough and concerning that should bring you to seek emergent medical care," says Dr. Michael Boniface, a Mayo Clinic emergency medicine physician. "If you experience these types of severe symptoms, you need to go to the closest emergency room or call 911."

Dr. Boniface says such symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath.
- Severe chest tightness or pain.
- Confusion.
- Passing out.
- Facial droop.
- Weakness or numbness, especially on one side of the body.
- Blurred vision.

"If you think you are experiencing symptoms concerning for COVID — like fever, body aches, joint aches, diarrhea, the loss of the sense of taste or smell — but they are not so severe that it's an immediate threat, I would strongly encourage you to call your doctor's office or local health department to get tested for COVID," Dr. Boniface says.

He adds that while news of COVID-19 vaccines has given people hope for the future, it's still important to be vigilant and continue modeling safe behaviors.

"We still need to be mindful because it's going to take many months before we get a sufficient population vaccinated to have the intended effect," says Dr. Boniface. "I urge you and encourage you to be careful

and maintain the precautions we have, including limiting in-person contact, social distancing and masking whenever possible. We've made it this far. We just need to make it a little further."

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